



Mappa Mundi

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Report

The future of borders: geopolitical trends and challenges to 2030

Wednesday 24 – Friday 26 February 2016 | WP1458

In association with:



Ministry
of Defence



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Executive Summary

- Borders are facing two opposing trends: a 'hardening' and 'softening', in terms of physical barriers and concepts. Participants noted that trends towards hardening borders were stronger than they had been for many years, but that the drivers for eroding borders remained strong. Both trends look set to continue for years.
- The evolution of borders is increasingly shaped by non-state actors and economic, political and legal ideas. Large technology companies and other private organisations are driving regulatory and protective policies traditionally led by the state.
- The key trends towards 2030 are: different forms of migration, security and conflict, the demands of economic efficiency, democracy, and the legitimacy of borders.
- Discussion of regional scenarios suggested that: in **East Asia** and the **Former Soviet Union** traditional state-state interactions were likely to shape the future of borders; borders in the **Middle East** were more likely to be shaped by interactions between both state and non-state actors; while in **Europe** the future of borders would be the product of states individually and collectively grappling with various long-term, structural social, economic and demographic trends.
- Borders are what people believe them to be. For this reason, we are likely to see a long-term trend away from borders defined purely as geographical boundaries towards borders as boundaries of communities of shared political and social ideas, economic interactions, and legal systems.

*I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river
Is a strong brown god – sullen, untamed and intractable,
Patient to some degree, at first recognised as a frontier;
Useful, untrustworthy, as a conveyor of commerce;
Then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges.
The problem once solved, the brown god is almost forgotten
By the dwellers in cities – ever, however, implacable,
Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder
Of what men choose to forget.*

T S Eliot, *The Dry Salvages*

Introduction

The conference considered trends shaping borders towards 2030, including historic, geopolitical, social, economic and legal. The discussions suggest that the nature of borders is fluid and changing, facing pressures which tend both to erode borders and to strengthen them. Borders are what we believe them to be, and will continue to change towards 2030. Some of the biggest challenges are not necessarily directly human e.g. climate volatility and competition for resources.

Borders create division and separation. They also fulfil concrete functions: demarcating a legal jurisdiction in which a society can determine and apply its own laws, political leadership and public policies. They can provide both sanctuary and a pretext for persecution. The regional discussions revealed a common desire to achieve mutually beneficial geopolitical outcomes through confidence-building and stronger international organisations.

2030 was chosen as the time horizon for this conference to balance aspirations for a long term perspective while allowing reasonably well-evidenced discussion. Forecasts of complex political and social trends tend to reduce in accuracy as timescales extend. But a timescale which is too short would not meet the goal of a futures conference to look beyond the immediate and obvious, and would add little to widely available short-term analysis.

“Civilization requires some kind of limits – the law requires some kind of limits, and borders provide that”

Context: the hardening and softening of borders

1. **Two paradoxical trends:** In one direction borders are being eroded by pressures for greater freedom of movement of people, economic activity and ideas. There is a simultaneous trend for borders to become ‘hardened’ by increased security and physical barriers, driven in part by a renewed desire for well-defined political communities, observable in places such as Scotland, Catalonia, Luhansk, and the growing role of cities. One participant noted that he had attended many events discussing globalisation – the erosion of borders; but this was the first event he had attended in which the relevance of borders had been the key theme. This reflected a shift in assumptions about the inevitability of globalisation which had been the dominant narrative for two decades.
2. **Are borders bad or good?** There is a widespread negative perception of borders in civil society, academia and wider public discourse. The very names of organisations like *Médecins sans frontières* convey the idea that borders obstruct well-meaning work. Countering this image is the narrative of legitimate democratic demands to ‘regain control’ of economic, political and social change and migration within established political communities. And borders remain vital for effective legal systems.

“ It was only as recently as the end of the 1990s that people were proclaiming a borderless world”

Actors

3. **The state:** the development of the European state, from the dominance of the church and religious authority, through the rise of national temporal authority and the post-Congress of Vienna settlement, ultimately defined borders as demarcating lines of political, economic and legal order. The church authority left a legacy in Western Europe of ‘something higher’ which political communities answered to. In modern states, law itself is that higher authority. This may be the strongest justification for borders: they represent the rule of law and regulation of a political economy.
4. **The private sector:** there is conflict between private companies’ desire to reduce obstacles to transnational economic interaction and their need for predictable, reliable legal systems to regulate contracts within defined geographical areas. Just as the growing power of the private sector leads some companies to pursue policies which erode borders, other companies pushing for legal certainty in weak or contested geographical spaces push for *de facto* borders to be created even before the formal political settlement of territorial disputes. At the same time, more large-scale transnational trade agreements are likely to generate more private litigation against

states.

“there is a continuing trend of large ‘tech’ companies, transnational groups, and even organised crime to operate beyond borders.”

5. **Sub-national actors:** growing networks of sub-national actors operates increasingly across national borders. Devolved administrations, governors and city mayors operate with counterparts, private actors and multilateral organisations in other nations; borders do not constrain them in the same way as other citizens.
6. **Transnational groups:** there is a continuing trend of large ‘tech’ companies, transnational groups, and even organised crime to operate beyond borders. These groups share increasingly complex relationships with national legal regimes. Whilst large tech companies are motivated to work with governments to promote their products, some company leaders are suspicious of- if not hostile to -government, regarding regulation as an obstacle to development of a connected world. Supranational authorities (e.g. IOM, EU) are playing an increasing role in managing the movement of people.

The Evolving Framework

“The image and status of a border will continue to portray the nature of the state inside.”

7. **Geopolitics versus the rules-based international order:** some participants argued that the hardening of borders signified a return to geopolitical self-interest over international cooperation and rule of law, and perhaps a slow return to ‘spheres of influence’. Many participants agreed that more international cooperation, including through international organisations, was needed to counter the underlying causes of these pressures on a cooperative, rules based international order.
8. **State security versus human security:** There is ongoing debate about whether borders should focus on the security and other needs of individual human beings or states; and about the balance between the sometimes competing needs of humans on different sides of a border. The global strain on resources, particularly food and water, is a large ‘push’ factor for the movement of people across borders. This in turn puts pressure on states to react by strengthening borders to safeguard national security. International obligations towards refugees have a significant impact. Some states deploy border controls on the premise that they can best protect populations within a state by preventing the flow of people across it. These pressures are particularly clear in current discussion of borders in the Eastern Mediterranean, which was until recently focused largely on prosperity concerns, and now “sings the song of a death trap.”
9. **Borders reflect the political community they contain:** whether the function is to keep people in or out, a border can act as a focal point for conflict. The image and status of a border will continue to portray the nature of the state inside. Road signs, phone signal, and walls mark the transition into a different legal and political system.

“We may be witnessing the limits of globalisation”

Border trends towards 2030

Democracy

10. **Democratic pressures are leading to the hardening of borders:** some people believe that the hardening of borders is caused by xenophobic elites. However, in many cases, particularly in Europe, it is a reaction to the concerns of the electorate. If an electorate appears to want stronger borders, properly functioning democratic governments will face pressures to carry out that task even if some political leaders would prefer not to.
11. **The potential tensions created by democratic pressures:** as migration grows, we are seeing a divergence between those who live in states and those who can vote and are seen to belong there. Vast swathes of people moving across borders away from humanitarian or other disasters can quickly reshape the political character of countries. A further mismatch is created because democracies work on short-term political cycles, whilst the environmental and other drivers of these movements require a long-term response.
12. **The re-appearance of walls:** The fall of the Berlin Wall was a symbolic turning point in

“social media is contributing to a new generation that consider borders less relevant.”

the history of the Cold War. In Northern Ireland, the removal of walls is reuniting communities once divided. Yet the European migrant crisis has seen border fences erected in Hungary and the Balkans, and rhetoric in the US presidential campaign has raised the prospect of a wall on the border with Mexico. Walls are being maintained eg. in Israel, and territorial flashpoints could lead to others being erected elsewhere. This behaviour may be viewed as a kneejerk reaction to insecurity which reverses the progress of recent decades.

Technology

13. **Social media is changing our perception of borders:** social media is contributing to a new generation that consider borders less relevant. One participant remarked that “social media is democratising free speech”. It is opening up new networks and markets, and changing the dynamics of power within polities from top-down to peer-to-peer. Governments are badly equipped to handle this and some are tempted to shut down access. Doing so would stifle valuable democratic and economic capital. Instead, it was suggested that governments should focus on how social media can empower them to deal with issues along borders and increase development efforts.
14. **The international community will continue to “be more wired, but not necessarily more global”:** over recent decades, globalisation has dominated international relations discourse. Technological development led many to believe we were breaking down barriers and borders. The very definition of globalisation often refers to the “collapsing or reducing of distance”. Yet Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is likely to be far outweighed by domestic investment in many developed economies. Furthermore, individuals are most likely to use social media to talk within a group of geographically proximate friends than someone across the world. Nevertheless, as data gathering and data sharing in both public and private sectors continue to grow, a new digitally-aware generation is likely to shift to greater connection with people beyond their national origin.

Legitimacy

15. **How legitimacy affects borders:** the legitimacy of a state’s international border is defined by the international community’s reactions to and perception of that state. For example, whilst Israel and (to some extent) Palestine are legally recognised entities, both have contended borders. Recent examples demonstrate that pressures to redraw borders can re-appear suddenly. It was suggested that nation-states in Europe think of their own borders before they think at a European level. Towards 2030, states are likely to continue emphasising the legitimacy of current borders, but Syria and Crimea suggest that these borders will continue to face pressures. Many sections of the private sector do not assume that borders are a given. Therefore, governments need to consider carefully the legitimacy of their borders where other actors do not agree.
16. **Commitment to or rejection of borders drawn by Europeans:** It is likely that the world will continue to move away from international borders as currently drawn, as the global balance of power shifts towards more states which feel disadvantaged by borders as they were defined when the European empires ended. Some of these rapidly developing states are willing to use military force to make the border changes they want. Increasingly, those states which can best protect their national interests are also those who most want to change their borders. However, the borders of previously colonised African countries have proven remarkably resilient, as some African elites viewed the instability associated with redrawing borders to be worse than managing with the sometimes arbitrary borders they had inherited from European empires.
17. **Some softening of borders is still occurring:** it was noted that countries in the Balkans – such as Montenegro - and beyond still aspire to join NATO and the EU. Discussion about borders in the West is perhaps currently skewed by the potential for ‘Brexit’ and the crisis in the Schengen Area. Softening of borders and integration often appears beneficial to smaller states that seek the benefits of joining open-bordered

“...pressures to redraw borders can re-appear suddenly.”

areas, whilst larger wealthier states could still defend their interests outside such blocs and are less comfortable with the migration and other redistributive pressures they experience within such blocs.

Migration

18. **Migration controls moving ‘in, out, up and down’:** Border controls can be seen as moving: ‘in’ – with more controls carried out well within states, particularly on migrants wishing to extend their stay; ‘out’ – with more border checks carried out overseas, well outside the physical national border, e.g. in refugee camps; ‘up’ – being closely directed and controlled by senior political leadership in response to political pressures; and ‘down’ – relying on local authorities and private actors e.g. landlords and banks required to check clients’ immigration status. Although public discourse may characterise “good and bad” entities crossing borders, governments should challenge such a simplistic picture, and border policy should continue to offer tailored solutions to complex problems.
19. **International obligations towards refugees and asylum-seekers will continue to influence our border policy:** a country that has signed up to the 1951 Refugee Convention has a responsibility to assist refugees. The current discourse on refugee protection is strongly linked to public perceptions of how governments should control borders. International discussion of this issue is increasingly dominated by security concerns, tying the status of refugees to an old idea of border security. However, the current humanitarian crisis may create pressure to shift the border debate away from hard security to a more rights-focused discourse.
20. **Developed nations with high economic growth will continue to ‘pull’ people across long distances:** people can travel further than ever before at lower cost, serving to soften borders and advance globalisation, but also potentially contributing to inequality. Smaller dislocations in a periphery can now lead to larger movements of people who can go further. Whilst ‘elite migrants’ continue to travel (and benefit from partial exemptions from border controls), those who do not have the means or the mobility, will remain in place. People with limited resources seek potentially dangerous migration paths, as evidenced in the Eastern Mediterranean. Such trends could lead to increasing diversity in developed countries and potentially irreversible ‘brain drains’ in developing countries.
21. **Education and migration:** Lower levels of education or lack of recognition of qualifications from countries of origin, can be an obstacle to integration. This can in turn create political tension and discord, driving demands for stronger border control as seen in Sweden. Education can contribute positively to the softening of borders, creating transnational markets for highly skilled workers and driving international cooperation.

“Lower levels of education or lack of recognition of qualifications from countries of origin, can be an obstacle to integration.”

Economy

22. **Economic growth will continue to shape borders:** borders have significant influence on foreign investors. The presence of valuable natural resources can be a driver for indigenous peoples to press for the redrawing of borders in post-colonial states. As more states develop economically, such claims may resurface in regions currently satisfied with the status quo. Growing populations and demand for resources create further drivers for contestation over borders. Trade deals can further disempower states and empower transnational investors, symptomatic of a broader trend away from nation-states to regional blocs. Britain has emerged as an attractive haven for global capital flows, contributing to its pull for elite migrants. This tendency for the gains from globalisation to be unevenly distributed between states itself spurs calls for borders to provide more economic protection.
23. **Debt as a driver of borders:** Greece, for example, had to reduce funding for border controls in order to meet its debt reduction goals, thus providing opportunities for migrant flows. The debt burden can harm a State’s ability to meet its side of the social

“Growing populations and demand for resources create further drivers for contestation over borders.”

contract, encouraging its citizens to move elsewhere, and spurring popular unrest and dissatisfaction with the “old guard”. Debt can cause states to avoid humanitarian and R2P obligations. If borders are to remain unchanged, defended, hardened, or softened then policy makers should understand that debt can trigger rapid changes in borders as well as the wider geo-political situation.

Security and Conflict

24. **The rise of offensive activity in cyberspace will call into question the utility of physical borders:** following recent confirmations of hardware destruction via malware corruption, the potential consequences of such actions are growing. There are currently no mechanisms in place to compensate the victim of cybercrime. This is contributing to the role of large corporations handling their own cyber enforcement, and reduces the role of the state in ensuring its citizens’ security.
25. **Conflict is increasing within borders and within regions:** instead of conflict occurring across cultural lines, in some cases conflict will be more likely *within* regions that benefit less from globalisation. Competition for resources will also be a source of conflict about borders.
26. **Border conflicts as drivers for new regional institutions:** the need for and likelihood of creating new regional institutions to deal with border disputes was discussed briefly. However, many believed such new institutions would only be created in response to extreme upheaval such as large-scale international conflict over those borders.
27. **Climate volatility will fuel conflict about borders:** an example of this is the ‘weaponisation of water’ in parts of the Middle East, North and West Africa and South East Asia. Water acts as a pull factor accelerating the movement of people to and from territories and driving disputes about borders. Food security and access to fish stocks are further drivers of border disputes with potentially geopolitical implications. States are again increasingly willing to act to protect their resources.
28. **A State’s approach to crime, such as the criminalisation of drugs, has effects on both sides of a border:** the war on drugs has been described as “the new version of The Emperor’s New Clothes”, driving cross-border chains of criminality and “start-up capital” for terrorism. As people continue to die through the war on drugs, many believe that by 2030 drugs will be viewed as a public health rather than law enforcement issue. Such a change would have profound impacts on people across borders, including transit states affected by drug trafficking. Drugs liberalisation in one country could trigger an influx of drugs into other countries. There could be harmful knock-on effects for developing nations lacking the state and social infrastructure which wealthier states have to deal with problems that may accompany greater use of legalised drugs. Colorado is the latest testing ground for legalisation of drugs, but the results are still uncertain, including how the regulated drug trade is affecting its borders and surrounding states. There is no clear answer yet about the public health effects of legalisation of drugs and participants appeared divided on the issue.

Scenarios

Break-out sessions developed scenarios as a way of fostering discussion about the potential evolution of borders in different geographical regions and to develop policy recommendations to encourage positive and avoid negative scenarios. The paragraphs below are a brief summary of the discussion, recorded in more detail in the annex.

29. **East Asia:** The geo-political flashpoints in the South and East China Seas dominated the analyses of East Asia. Many drivers were discussed, including labour, demographics, and climate; the overwhelming focus was on China’s developing sense of its own interests and security, particularly with the US. The central scenario presented continuity on most current strategic trends, but suggested the reunification of the Korean Peninsula and a slowing of the Chinese economy. In an attempt to promote and work towards the positive scenario, participants believed all states need to be more

flexible in defining their national interests, undertake confidence-building measures, use international legal instruments and 'freeze-frame' territorial claims to de-escalate tensions.

30. **Middle East:** This discussion focused on security given the threats across the region. The group's scenarios ranged from extreme conflict to a freezing of current military positions. The balance of power depended on Turkey, Israel and Iran as the region's most stable states. The reduced oil price and presence of ISIS remained as the region's key drivers to 2030. Variables ranged from the collapse of certain states to a period of peaceful co-existence based on political and military exhaustion. The policy recommendations included developing of a new pluralistic Islamic narrative and agreements with increased oversight from international organisations and extra-regional Great Powers. This would require peacekeeping forces, commitment to continued engagement by influential actors, and, some suggested, recognition of an independent Kurdistan.
31. **Former Soviet Union:** The central scenario suggested that frozen conflict zones would continue, and Russia and the West would revert to transactional co-existence. Even on a more positive path Russia's domestic political framework was unlikely to change, but societal attitudes towards the political establishment and cooperation with the West may improve, allowing more cooperative and stable regional relationships. If Russian revanchism were to increase, there may be further escalations of conflict including in the FSU, with Turkey and the Arctic. To counter the worst and promote the best outcomes the group suggested a combination of deterrence against Russian aggression, reassurance both to FSU states and to Russia, and engagement with Russia on areas of common interest.
32. **Europe:** Analyses from this group focused on the central issue of migration. The central scenario portrayed a Europe working with hyper-mobility, the instrumentalisation of migration by neighbouring states, urban-countryside split, and contrasted migration patterns. The threats translated into a worst-case scenario that envisaged a breakdown of the Schengen area and fragmentation of the EU. The positive scenario portrayed a region redefining its identity through burden-sharing and embracing a more engaged foreign policy in the Middle East.

Conclusions

- i. **Borders are what we choose to make them:** participants described "a move from geo-politics to psycho-geography". The political and social saliency of borders rose or fell in inverse ratio to national self-confidence, with nation-states (or other polities) much less concerned with borders the more they feel physically secure and secure in their identity. Many participants argued borders are defined by the attitudes of political leaders and their political communities and that there is a shift from an international rules-based order to a more power-based system.
- ii. **The future of borders is directly linked to the future of the nation state:** this is related to economic growth, popular demand for the hardening of borders, and sense of insecurity amongst electorates. The international order now provides much less protection and predictability for nation states. Competition for resources and the global commons are flashpoints for border disputes which can even draw in geographically distant states.
- iii. **Tensions between different actors within states will continue to shape borders:** for example, the defence and security establishment often wants to secure borders while commercial actors tend to favour looser borders. This is one example of a recurring tension between tendencies to 'harden' and 'soften' borders.
- iv. **The emergence of walls is negative:** the world is currently seeing walls and fences being built along borders. Walls can be forces for good and bad. But most participants felt walls solidify a community of privilege and impede international cooperation.
- v. **There remains no established path to statehood:** the international community

"Borders are what we choose to make them."

would find it hard to deal with any claim for sovereignty from, for example, Kurdistan. Participants concluded that the path to statehood remains highly contextual, and related to the first concluding point: that borders are what people make of them.

- vi. **Designating borders is no longer only about geography, but also about ideas, markets and legal instruments:** Borders are more conceptual than the world once believed them to be and this trend is likely to continue towards 2030.
- vii. **Confidence-building as a means to an end:** confidence-building on migration, military operations, and economic relations between states was recommended by many participants as a means to achieve stable borders, particularly in the discussions about regions and geopolitical flashpoints.

James Gardiner

Wilton Park | March 2016

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Annex: Scenarios discussed and created by participants

Rationale

In break-out sessions on day two, participants discussed and created scenarios for potential future developments affecting the shape and nature of borders in four regions: East Asia, the Middle East, the Former Soviet Union and Europe. On day three, the break out groups developed recommendations to governments and other actors for policy responses to avert the negative scenarios and to enable the positive.

East Asia

Central scenario

There were six basic elements to the central scenario. The four based on current conditions:

- i. Continued tensions in China and the United States' (US) strategic relationship, but no significant escalation.
- ii. Increased internal conflicts in China's west.
- iii. Broad continuity in the geopolitical landscape; China and Japan would continue to hold deep distrust, but no significant changes in Japan's security policy, no war, and no use of nuclear weapons.
- iv. Continued territorial disputes over the South China Sea, but nothing more than small skirmishes.

Two represented more discontinuity:

- i. A collapse of the current North Korean regime, followed by a messy reunification of the Korean Peninsula, which would become a neutral and independent state.
- ii. A major Chinese financial crisis, the economy slowing to less than 3% growth, increasing pressure on the social contract between party and people and generating the need for further reform.

Main drivers

- i. Chinese domestic scenario
- ii. China – US security
- iii. China's western border
- iv. DPRK
- v. China-Japan relations
- vi. Maritime security

Additional drivers

- i. Middle East war
- ii. Cross-border insecurity
- iii. The role of India
- iv. TPP
- v. The role of Australia
- vi. China's behaviour internationally
- vii. Security architecture presence / absence

- viii. Social discontent and political instability
- ix. Global food security
- x. China – Africa relationship
- xi. Competing energy security strategies
- xii. ASEAN
- xiii. Hong Kong and Taiwan

Black Swans / Unforeseen events:

- i. Major earthquake
- ii. Peaceful Korean unification
- iii. Further Chinese influence in ASEAN
- iv. US withdrawal from region
- v. Nuclear escalation
- vi. China / Vietnam conflict
- vii. Major change in Japanese regional assertiveness

Alternative scenarios

1. Positive:

- a. Tensions and distrust are managed peacefully, with US/China dispute over the South China Sea not being resolved entirely.
- b. There would be recourse to multilateral processes, international legal mechanisms, but most importantly a determination by all sides to find a way through and not take provocative steps.
- c. ASEAN plays a bigger role in economic and security cooperation
- d. Resolution of current regional disputes
- e. China has steady growth to rebalance economy
- f. Liberalisation and democratisation in China

2. Negative:

- a. Tensions escalate on all sides, starting with trade wars and up to and including direct clashes between China and the US in the South China Sea.
- b. Political crisis in China
- c. Breakdown of order in West China and terrorism in Beijing
- d. US begins trade wars
- e. A destabilising collapse of North Korea and other regional clashes was also posited. In this case, it was envisaged that China would step-in.
- f. Wars between other Asian powers.

On voting for the most likely scenario, few in the wider group believed this more negative scenario was likely.

Recommendations

- i. All states needed to be more flexible in defining their national interests
- ii. Confidence-building measures over military capabilities and intentions were necessary. A 'freeze frame' was suggested, involving agreement by all sides to

- refrain from any further escalation of military assets in the South China Sea.
- iii. Outside parties and legal instruments would be helpful, providing a neutral platform for impartial dispute resolution on these issues.
 - iv. All parties have a vested interest in seeing positive growth in the Chinese domestic economy, to further stimulate the world economy. In order to achieve this domestic growth and to further promote regional economic cooperation, China should be included in the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP).
 - v. United States-China cooperation is needed to achieve a positive future for the Korean Peninsula.
 - vi. The international community needs to continue confidence-building and develop understanding of the Chinese national interest.

Middle East

Central scenario

A triangle of stability in the region is composed of Iran, Turkey, and Israel. They are the only powers that remain unchanged. Outside this triangle the region is characterised by chaos and varying degrees of instability. In this scenario, ISIS is still present and operational in the region, with the United States and European Union heavily present. Oil prices would also remain low. Participants were keen to stress that negativity bias was set from the beginning given the conflict-ridden condition of the region. Given the wide range of 'hard' problems involved in the Middle East scenario, participants did not factor in the effects of climate change. Jordan faces an increase of Palestinian radicalisation and Lebanon becomes entangled further into the Syrian conflict. Additionally, Kurdistan would likely emerge as an internationally recognised state.

Drivers

- i. Egypt emerging as a new pole of stability under development-minded regime
- ii. Federated Iraq and Syria slowly burn out
- iii. Population growth
- iv. Stable Saudi Arabia under young leadership
- v. An alternative ideological narrative being generated

Alternative scenarios

1. Positive:

- a. A situation based on exhaustion. Not strictly under the conditions of battle attrition, but also in a generational transition: that younger generations within the region would simply negotiate and lobby against conflict.
- b. Economic reform would reinforce political reform
- c. The creation of a moderate religious and pluralistic narrative that counters extremist ideology.
- d. Defined principally by a "Federated Sunni World" led mostly by the stabilisation of Saudi Arabia and Egypt. This would coexist alongside a "Federated Iraq and Syria" with territories guaranteed by external actors.

2. Negative:

- a. A political implosion of the Arab nation states. This included instability in Saudi Arabia because of the price of basic commodities, and this would consequently lead to the collapse of other Arab states.
- b. In an extreme hypothetical, participants identified a scenario whereby Sunni-Shi'a tensions would boil over into a conflict across the region and result in the

end of Arab nation-states as we currently know them.

- c. Sustained low oil prices and a lack of economic reform
- d. Passive attitude of world powers

Recommendations

- i. Inspire and insist on the new pluralistic Islamic narrative, to counter the ISIS narrative
- ii. Create carriers for this narrative in the region by way of proxies
- iii. Get to an agreement between major powers on this type of framework: whereby all agree to counter this narrative, all participate via proxies, and broad agreement for cooperation beyond nation-state oversight. To accomplish this, international powers would need to develop stronger peacekeeping capabilities, promote people who can create credibility in the region, a broader awareness of the consequences of disengagement from the region, and finally, a wider recognition of Kurdistan.

Principally, the scenarios gave consideration to the idea that Iran would not modernise, and that Kurdistan provided a good pillar of stability in the region.

Participants believed that the international community needed to give equal weight to the domestic concerns of Muslim communities outside the Middle East and North Africa.

Former Soviet Union (FSU)

Central scenario

The oil price recovers to an acceptable level and the current frozen conflicts in the Donbass and Crimean Peninsula become an acceptable consequence of avoiding war with Russia. Ukraine and Georgia develop a “transactional” relationship with Russia whilst Central Asia maintains a relationship of co-existence between Russia and China. Russia and the West return to a policy of cohesion and coexistence; this will define a new status quo in which the West attempts to contain a revanchist Russia. The BRICs retain their increased status and the US remains moderately engaged in the region.

Drivers

This group identified many drivers shaping the scenarios. The following were considered to be the most pertinent:

- i. Return to cohesion and coexistence both in Russia and Europe
- ii. Cohesion in Russia: the role of nationalism, the resilience of the kleptocracy, political party fragmentation and conspiracy-driven worldviews
- iii. ‘Containment’ of the West and perception of US-Europe relations
- iv. Economic trends on energy pricing and growth within Russia – including Foreign Direct Investment into Russia and the FSU
- v. The changing face of Political Islam in Russia and Europe
- vi. China’s economic dynamism and relationships in Central Asia
- vii. Climate and other developments affecting access and exploitability of the Arctic
- viii. Responses from the West
- ix. Russia and the BRICS: the competing interests of emerging powers
- x. Russia’s operations in Syria and counter-terrorism measures
- xi. Demography
- xii. Relationship with Iran
- xiii. Process of decolonisation in the FSU

Alternative scenarios

1. **Positive:** Both Russia and its neighbours remain reasonably cohesive and revert to stable co-existence. The frozen conflicts remain frozen but Russia would not go further. Russia's domestic political framework was unlikely to change, but society might. Further elements to this scenario include:
 - i. The Eurasian Economic Union and One Belt, One Road (OBOR) develop in complementary ways, with China acting as a moderating force
 - ii. Russia develops cooperative, responsible relations with the EU and NATO
 - iii. Improvements to the rule of law and institutions within Russia
 - iv. Economic growth in Russia picks up and it diversifies away from commodities
 - v. Russia redefines its external relations away from security to economic prosperity
 - vi. Social interactions between people of the FSU and the West increase and become constructive
 - vii. NATO and the EU makes assurances to support FSU states, while assuring Russia that they will not expand membership to those states
 - viii. Russia opts for a policy of soft power in the FSU eg increasing scientific, cultural and academic collaboration
2. **Negative:** this scenario was defined by 4 elements:
 - i. Aggressive instability: a regional land grab in the Arctic, a deterioration of relations with Turkey and similar problems with NATO and in Central Asia.
 - ii. Economy and trade: changing oil prices leading to a more aggressive government and the new Silk Road leading to instability
 - iii. Governance: leveraging of WMDs and cyber capacity for hybrid warfare alongside the replacement of Putin with someone more difficult to engage with.
 - iv. US disengages / EU fragments

Recommendations

The FSU group opted to mitigate the pessimistic scenario and promote the optimistic scenario in 3 ways:

- i. Deterrence: 'Western' borders ought to be effective and credible: 'red lines' ought to be reinforced with meaningful commitments and the West (Europe and the USA) ought to be resolute with the Russian leadership. There needs to be no doubt that NATO's commitment to Article 5 was meaningful;
- ii. Reassurance: At the same time, the West needed to avoid stoking Russian perceptions of threat needlessly. For example, there were questions around whether signals about NATO enlargement made sense if NATO members did not in fact have the will to defend potential new members. It may make more sense for the West to strongly support the economic and political sovereignty of FSU states, strengthen their defence capabilities, but avoid raising unrealistic expectations of more extensive military support. Participants asked: are we simply making spheres of influence? Discussion suggested that the group did not accept spheres of influence, but that the right policy responses could promote a more cooperative and less adversarial relationship between the West, Russia, other FSU states, and China – a key player in Central Asia.
- iii. Engagement: There was an emphasis on finding and working on common interests: terrorism, Central Asian security, in the MENA region, in non-proliferation and arms control, strategic nuclear arms control, on AIIB and the new institution architecture. There was also an appreciation of the need to do more to understand

Russia's goals, perceptions and worldview.

Europe

Central scenario

- i. The central scenario to frame European trends observed a Schengen area weakened durably. This was paired with a split in the EU/border region into an eastern border with frozen conflict, a southern maritime border, and north western hubs with elite migration. The United Kingdom, France, and Germany would start to manoeuvre against the Eastern Europeans for cautionary reasons and a two-tier free movement zone would emerge. Southern member states dealing with migration from the Middle East and Africa would also be isolated from a core Schengen area. Institutionally, the Schengen area survives but regroups States around France and Germany. The United Kingdom remains outside of Schengen and opts out of all migration related policies.

The key drivers underlying the central scenario were based on migration trends:

- i. Hyper-mobility: people communicate and move more quickly than States. Migrants are taking over smuggling networks and control the passage across land and sea borders.
- ii. States instrumentalise migration flows and exploit dependencies. Russia, Turkey, others leverage migration against financial and political gains.
- iii. Free-movement as it currently exists in the EU does not survive. Within European States, support for nationalism increases while support for integration, solidarity, burden-sharing and enlargement declines.
- iv. Division between the cities and countryside of Europe.
- v. Violence and conflict in the Middle East and North Africa stabilise but still push migrants out.
- vi. Questions relating to the Eurozone were intentionally left out of this scenario.

Alternative scenarios

1. **Negative:** The key drivers that fuelled the negative scenario include the proximity of nearby conflict-ridden countries, the attractiveness of the EU to migrants, the backlash of populism in the face of liberal tolerance, and the recruitment of radicals on European soil. The most likely outcome of these was an entrenched and endemic fragmentation of the EU; reduced EU influence on the world stage, and the Eurozone splintered. Less likely outcomes included the Western Balkans becoming de facto internment camps for migrants and Greece being ejected as a member of Schengen.
2. **Positive:** This scenario was characterised by a new EU vision and model; including an equal distribution of growth, wealth and migrants. The Schengen and Eurozone areas would be preserved and equality of borders maintained. Southern European states would be on the road to recovery and in a state of stable political cooperation. There would be greater inter-regional trade and economic cooperation with Asia and others. From this would emerge a new generation of visionary leaders akin to Jean Monnet, and the European Union would trend towards a more cohesive "society of states". In terms of voting, a reduction of the crisis in the MENA region was voted as the most "desirable" outcome in a positive scenario. However, in terms of sustained pressure of globalisation on economic growth, this was ranked highest in terms of "likelihood" by participants.

Recommendations

- i. Have a strategic narrative and redefine the future of the EU. The vision of an ever closer union with more powers handed over to Brussels and closer integration is not realistic. Nor is it an option to return to a Europe led by Nations. A new vision

- for the EU's future will help overcome both the migration and Euro crises. Reinforce external borders and demonstrate that the migration crisis cannot be solved by Member States alone.
- ii. Strengthen the external border. Move European border assistance to the Middle East and involve the United Nations. This includes prioritising a legal regime for Syria.
 - iii. Create better problem-sharing mechanisms especially with regard to migrants.
 - iv. Influence the public narrative and stop giving the appearance of inaction.
 - v. Accept that the EU and the Eurozone are not the same thing. Reconfigure the Eurozone and allow Greece and other Member States to leave it in order to devalue. Present it as a positive, not a negative, outcome: it is a temporary setback but the destination point remains unchanged (i.e. an EU wide single currency). Prepare public opinions and commit to Greece's long term membership of the EU.
 - vi. Avoid 'Brexit': the possible consequences of the UK leaving need to be engaged within the EU as much as they are in the UK.
 - vii. Avoid putting too much weight on and grant too much power to Germany and recognise how it aggravated the migrant crisis.
 - viii. Agree on an enlargement pause as long as the EU hasn't overcome the migration and Euro crises.